Symbols: Progression Of Regression Essay, Research Paper

To fully understand an author?s central theme, one must appreciate the symbols he uses and what the symbols represent. The symbols used by Nobel Prize winning author William Golding, in his novel Lord of the Flies, illustrates this need for comprehension. The characters in this novel, a group of school aged British boys, are stranded on a tropical utopia. Ralph, who is the chosen chief, tries to keep a sense of civilization alive with rules and responsibility; Piggy aids Ralph by being the voice of reason and knowledge. A split between the boys leads to Jack taking control and creating his immoral and reckless tribe. The boys? regression from a civilized society to savagery is symbolized by the use of Piggy?s glasses, the fire and the importance of the conch.

Firstly, the glasses, worn by Piggy represent intelligence and technology. The boys use ?his specs-?as burning glasses? (Golding 41). They use their intuitiveness and teamwork to make the fire that would later aid in their rescue and are very concerned with starting the fire and keeping it going. But, in no time the state of the glasses begin to deteriorate because of a clash between Jack and Piggy when ?Jack smacked Piggy?s head?and Piggy?s glasses flew off and tinkled on the rocks? (Golding 75). One side of Piggy?s glasses are broken; this shows the boys lack of compassion because they do not care if Piggy can see. Furthermore, when Jack and his tribe take control one night ?they came, stealing?at night, in darkness, and stole?? (Golding 188). The boys have finally crossed the line, like thieves they stole Piggy?s glasses not caring that they blinded him. The glasses, depreciate in value throughout the novel. They go from being intact and representing good judgment, to being half-intact to their total devastation when they are stolen by Jack and his out of control tribe.

Subsequently, the fire, in particular, the rescue, fire was of great importance to the boys in the beginning but towards the end it lost all value and was no longer kept as a main priority. In the beginning, the fire was only meant to be used as a rescue signal; the reason for this fire was to ?help them to find us (the boys). If a ship comes near the island they may not notice us. So we must make smoke on top of the mountain? (Golding 37). At this point, the boy?s main mission is to get off of the island. Additionally, throughout the novel, the boys begin to care less and less about keeping the fire going. Ralph commented ??Can?t they see? Can?t they understand? Without the smoke signal we?ll die here??? (Golding 153). Ralph is trying to keep the idea alive but the boys are starting to care more about other things and less about keeping the fire going. In addition, Ralph makes a final plea to the boys, mainly Jack, in a fit of fury. He says ??don?t you understand? You painted fools? Sam, Eric, Piggy and me-we aren?t enough. We tried to keep the fire going, but we couldn?t, and then you, playing at hunting???(Golding 197). Ralph?s rescue fire task is slowly dying and Jack?s hunters could not be bothered with the thought of being rescued. All they want to do is have hunt and have fun. The importance of the fire changes a great deal in the novel. The boys go from wanting to be rescued too not even caring at all.

Finally, the use of the conch is of great importance because it establishes rules and gives whomever posses it power. At an assembly Ralph said ??we?ll have to have ?hands up? like at school?then I?ll give them the conch??? (Golding 31). The boys who chose Ralph as the leader are quite ready to follow the rules of the conch and they respect it. Unfortunately, when the boys moved on to Jack?s tribe, the conch began losing the authority it once had. In a conversation with Piggy over Ralph?s rank as chief, Ralph said, ?If I blow the conch, and they don?t come back; then we?ve had it. We shan?t keep the fire going. We?ll be like animals. We?ll never be rescued.? (Golding 99). The boys slowly shifted towards Jack?s tribe and disregard the only element of order apparent on the island. Finally, when ?the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist.? When the conch was destroyed, it brought Ralph to a cruel reality. All the boys had become savages and were not the same boys he once knew. The conch was a symbol of authority and order, and as the boys regressed, the conch became less and less important to them.

By using these symbols, Golding clearly emphasizes the boy?s degeneration from a proper British society to complete savagery. Moreover, Piggy?s glasses, which symbolized intelligence and technology, later through their gradual destruction became a symbol of corrupt power. The fire, which was so imperative to the boys? rescue slowly regressed and at the end became a symbol of the old rules. The conch, which once was a symbol of rules and authority, held no meaning at the end besides reminding the boys of how far they drifted from civilization. To conclude, the greater understanding a reader has of the symbols in a novel, the greater the impact of the author?s central theme.